

Documentary: German-Texan Artists Lungkwitz and Petri “Hin nach Texas”

An excellent 45-minute documentary film on Hermann Lungkwitz and Richard Petri was produced by Suenderhauf Produktion of Germany in 2002. It demonstrates in a truly refined way the great contributions made to the cultural development of Texas by well educated German immigrants.

The project was financed with a small grant from German government sources. The documentary is now available in German and received excellent reviews after it was recently premiered at a film festival in Dresden. However, the original production grant from German sources was not large enough to have the documentary also produced in English. For approximately \$5000 - it can be professionally converted to English in Berlin.

The German-Texan Heritage Society has been listed as co-sponsor of the film, although no GTHS money has been spent for it, only members' volunteer hours. If GTHS would get enough donations earmarked to pay for the English edition, certain rights to use it for fundraising and selling copies would be granted by Suenderhauf Produktion. Individuals could also purchase a copy of the video for a price not yet determined.

Here is a short summary of the documentary, which was filmed in Texas as well as on locations in Germany:

The story covers the lives of Hermann Lungkwitz (1813 - 1891) who was born in Halle, Germany, and died in Austin, Texas, and of Richard Petri (1824 - 1857) who was born in Dresden, Germany, and died near Fredericksburg, Texas.

Both painters were educated at the highly acclaimed Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Dresden on which the film elaborates in details.

In the late 1840s they got involved with political unrest and decided to immigrate to Texas. They first farmed near Fredericksburg to make a living. However, they pursued their artistic ambitions at the same time. Lungkwitz painted mainly central Texas landscapes; Petri's specialty was drawing and painting Indians and life on the farm. Although they were not financially very successful with their works of art during their lifetime, their pictures, sketches, and memorabilia are now highly appreciated in major museums, in the Governor's Mansion, the Capitol, in galleries and homes of collectors. They are a unique testimony of their times.

The background of well educated Germans and their contributions and influence on the Texas frontier and the cultural development of the state is a major storyline in the film.

After Petri's death in 1854, Lungkwitz and his family moved to San Antonio, where he worked with Iwonski as a photographer. Later Lungkwitz traveled giving Magic Lantern shows. After the Civil War he moved to Austin and worked for the Land Office as its first photographer. To the very end of his life he painted Central Texas landscapes, including the missions in San Antonio and in Austin scenes along Shoal Creek. He was also active singing in German choirs and producing scenes for performances and festivals.

This documentary film is a great celebration of the lives of immigrants. It also contributes in a distinguished way to carry out the mission of GTHS: Promoting awareness and preservation of the German cultural heritage of Texas.

Donations to help finance the conversion to English can be made to the German-Texan Heritage Society (mention "Lungkwitz account"), a 501 (c)(3) organization.

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